



Essary, K., & Haskell, Y. (2018). Calm and Violent Passions: The Genealogy of a Distinction from Quintilian to Hume. *Erudition and the Republic of Letters*, 3(1), 55-81. <https://doi.org/10.1163/24055069-00301003>

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## **Calm and Violent Passions: The Genealogy of a Distinction from Quintilian to Hume**

Abstract: While the distinction between the calm and violent passions has been treated by Hume scholars from a number of perspectives relevant to the Scottish philosopher's thought more generally, little scholarly attention has been paid to this distinction either in the works of Hume's non-English contemporaries (e.g., the French Jesuit Pierre Brumoy) or in the long rhetorical and literary tradition which often categorized the emotions as either calm or violent. This article examines the long history of the distinction between calm and violent, or mild and vehement, emotions from the classical Roman rhetorical tradition through the Renaissance and into the modern period. In doing so, it provides a partial but substantial genealogy of an important heuristic taxonomy in the history of emotions, while suggesting that the philosophical import of the distinction in the eighteenth century owes something to rhetorical and poetic traditions which are often not considered by historians of philosophy.

Keywords: David Hume – Pierre Brumoy, SJ – Erasmus – Vives – Melanchthon – Quintilian – calm and violent passions – ethos and pathos -- history of emotions

Historians and philosophers of emotion will be broadly familiar with the systems of the passions of Aristotle, Cicero, Aquinas, Descartes, Malebranche and Hume, but less so with that of Hume's contemporary, French Jesuit poet and professor at the Collège Louis-le-Grand, Pierre Brumoy (1668-1742), whose twelve-book Latin poem "On the Passions" (*De motibus animi*) was published in the first and second tomes of his *Recueil de divers ouvrages en prose et en vers* (Paris: Rollin, fils, 1741), but probably begun at least a decade before that.<sup>1</sup> At the

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<sup>1</sup> See Yasmin Haskell, "Performing the Passions: Pierre Brumoy's *De motibus animi* between Dramatic and Didactic Poetry", forthcoming in Yasmin Haskell and Raphaële Garrod (eds.), *Changing Hearts: Performing Jesuit Emotions between Europe, Asia and the Americas* (Leiden: Brill), and Karin

heart of Brumoy's poem are two books dividing the passions into the "milder" and "fiercer". Brumoy's sorting of the passions is sometimes surprising. For example, he classifies pride, shame, hardness of heart, tyranny in friendship, and even sexual jealousy among the "milder" passions. A different and more famous distinction between "calm" and "violent" passions was made, of course, by Brumoy's contemporary, David Hume (1711-1776), in the second book of his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739). It is likely that Hume was primarily influenced by Frances Hutcheson's distinction between passions and calm affections in his "Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections" (1728), although it is not impossible he caught sight of a draft of Brumoy's poem when he sojourned in France in 1734-7.<sup>2</sup> However that may be, the topic of calm or mild versus fierce or violent passions seems to have been in the air at this time, at least to judge by Hume's declaration: "There is not in philosophy a subject of more nice speculation than this of the different causes and effects of the calm and violent passions" (*THN* 2.3.4).

Elizabeth Radcliffe, in her 2015 review article of the scholarship on Hume's passions, concedes that: "Hume's taxonomy ... offers some distinctions whose features are not always clear. His fundamental division between calm and violent passions is defined in terms of the internal upheaval with which a passion is felt: calm passions cause 'no disorder in the soul', are known by their effects, and are often mistaken for reason".<sup>3</sup> From the secondary literature we have surveyed we infer that most of the modern scholarship on Hume's taxonomy of the passions has revolved around its internal consistency (or not); its connections with Hume's ideas about reason, instinct, selfhood, love, happiness, and religion; and the relative originality of the calm/violent, strong/weak, direct/indirect distinctions (explained below). But while

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Kukkonen, "The Literary Designer Environments of Eighteenth-Century Jesuit Poetics", forthcoming in *The History of Distributed Cognition: Enlightenment and Romanticism*.

<sup>2</sup> Alison Gopnik, "Could David Hume Have Known about Buddhism?", in *Hume Studies* 35 (1/2) (2010): 5-28.

<sup>3</sup> "Hume's Psychology of the Passions: The Literature and Future Directions", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 53, Number 4, October 2015, pp. 565-605, at 569.

Paxman and Immerwahr, for example, have highlighted the pervasive importance of the calm and violent passions for Hume's thought,<sup>4</sup> it would seem that little attention has been paid to the longer, often literary and rhetorical, backstory to this distinction. Radcliffe, for example, cites an older article by James Fieser, in which Hume's passions are traced back to Stoic primitives, and suggests that the Stoics may be the "source of the distinction in both Hutcheson and Hume between calm and violent passions" insofar as they viewed passions as "perturbations causing emotional upheaval" (p. 570).<sup>5</sup> But there is a quite rich—and as yet unstudied—tradition of distinguishing between the calm and violent passions in the Western rhetorical and literary tradition dating back at least to the Roman rhetorician Quintilian and running through to the early modern period. Like the rest of his system, Hume's notion of the calm and violent passions was not born fully formed from the head of Jove, Chrysippus, let alone Hutcheson. This essay attempts to plot some of the classical and early modern stepping-stones that may have led, via sometimes unconnected, sometimes converging, paths, to the taxonomic schemes of the calm versus violent passions we find in Hume and Brumoy.

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Church historian, poet and literary critic Pierre Brumoy, SJ, was professor of mathematics at the Collège Louis-le-Grand and editor of the Jesuit *Mémoires de Trévoux*. He is best known for his *Théâtre des Grecs* (Paris, 1730), a multi-volume translation of the works of Aeschylus,

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<sup>4</sup> Thus Katharina Paxman: "Though Hume spends relatively little time giving direct treatment to the distinction, commentators have found it to play important roles in much of his writing. John Immerwahr ["Tranquillizing the Passions", *Hume Studies* 18.2 (1992): 293-314] has argued that many of Hume's investigations on topics including morality, happiness, religion, and politics are informed by his distinction between calm and violent passions" ("Imperceptible Impressions and Disorder in the Soul: A Characterization of the Distinction between Calm and Violent Passions in Hume", *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 13.3 (2015): 265–278.

<sup>5</sup> James Fieser, "Hume's Classification of the Passions and its Precursors", *Hume Studies* 18.1 (1992): 1-17.

Sophocles and Euripides, translated into English by Charlotte Lennox in 1759 (*The Greek Theatre* was certainly known to Hume). It is not possible here to review in detail the system of the passions Brumoy elaborates in his long Latin poem on the passions, *De motibus animi*. The section that concerns us for the purposes of this essay begins in the eighth book, where Brumoy reminds us that he has, thus far, treated the “father and the three principal passions” (viz. love, happiness, suffering, and desire),<sup>6</sup> and that it is now time to descend to the “general populace”. There follows a census of two tribes of passions, the “milder”/ “sweet” (“mansuetiores”/ “douces”) and the “fiercer”/ “violent” (“ferociiores”/ “violentes”).<sup>7</sup> These are rendered as allegorical, indeed *dramatic*, figures in the course of Brumoy’s eighth and ninth books. On the mild side we find hope (“spes”), confidence (“fiducia”), pride (“superbia”), flattery (“adulatio”), haughtiness (“fastidium”), hardness of heart (“inclementia”), reverence (“veneratio”), despondency (“abjectio animi”), shame (“pudor”), compassion (“commiseratio”), favour (“favor”), gratitude (“gratia”), laziness (“segnities”), indulgence/ forbearance (“indulgentia”), indignation/ judgmentalism (“indignatio”), tyranny in friendship (“tyrannis in amicitia”), and, most surprisingly, sexual suspicion/ jealousy (“diffidentia in amore”). The violent passions include hatred (“odium”), betrayal (“proditio”), calumny (“calumnia”), envy (“invidia”), anger (“anger”), rage (“furor”), boldness (“audacia”), cowardice (“ignavia”), fear (“timor”), remorse (“conscientiarum stimuli”), and despair (“desperatio”).

Brumoy’s “milder” and “fiercer” passions are, on the face of it, different in kind from Hume’s “calm” and “violent”. In *THN* 2.1.1 Hume first makes a rough division between original and reflective impressions: “Of the first kind are all the impressions of the senses, and all bodily pains and pleasures: Of the second are the passions, and other emotions resembling

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<sup>6</sup> In the fourth book Brumoy had asserted that from “Love” spring the three principal passions of “Happiness, Suffering and Desire” (“la Joie, la Douleur & le Désir”), coincidentally the same three proposed by Spinoza in his *Ethics*! While we proceed directly from “Happiness” (book 4) to “Sadness and Suffering” (book 5), the sixth book, “Laughter and Tears”, seems to be an intermission before the seventh, “Longing and Desires”.

<sup>7</sup> The French calques from the Latin comparatives are Brumoy’s own.

them.”<sup>8</sup> The following paragraph is key:

The reflective impressions may be divided into two kinds, viz. the *calm* and the *violent*.

Of the first kind is the sense of beauty and deformity in action, composition, and external objects. Of the second are the passions of love and hatred, grief and joy, pride and humility. This division is far from being exact. The raptures of poetry and music frequently rise to the greatest height; while those other impressions, properly called *passions*,<sup>9</sup> may decay into so soft an emotion, as to become, in a manner, imperceptible.

In *THN* 2.3.3 Hume explains that when such passions are “calm, and cause no disorder in the soul, they are very readily taken for the determinations of reason” and that “[w]hat we call strength of mind, implies the prevalence of the calm passions above the violent”. In *THN* 2.3.4, he sheds further light on how a calm or “imperceptible” passion might function, and further distinguishes between a calm and weak, a violent and a strong:

’Tis evident passions influence not the will in proportion to their violence, or the disorder they occasion in the temper; but on the contrary, that when a passion has once become a settled principle of action, and is the predominant inclination of the soul, it commonly produces no longer any sensible agitation. As repeated custom and its own force have made every thing yield to it, it directs the actions and conduct without that opposition and emotion, which so naturally attend every momentary gust of passion. *We must, therefore, distinguish betwixt a calm and a weak passion; betwixt a violent and a strong one.* (emphasis ours)

Here Hume seems to conceive a calm passion almost as a disposition or habit that flies under

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<sup>8</sup> We cite the original edition from <http://www.davidhume.org/texts/thn.html>.

<sup>9</sup> In this context Hume further divides the passions (proper) into direct and indirect, the first arising “immediately from good or evil, pain or pleasure”, the second “such as proceed from the same principles, but by the conjunction of other qualities. This distinction I cannot at present justify or explain any farther. I can only observe in general, that under the indirect passions I comprehend pride, humility, ambition, vanity, love, hatred, envy, pity, malice, generosity, with their dependants. And under the direct passions, desire, aversion, grief, joy, hope, fear, despair and security.” According to Jane McIntyre, this distinction between direct and indirect passions is entirely original to Hume: “Hume’s Passions: Direct and Indirect,” *Hume Studies* 26 (2000) 77-86, at 78.

the radar of our awareness. Yet it is not necessarily weak, because it affects our will and can even “control [the violent passions] in their most furious movements” (*THN* 2.3.8).

Nevertheless, Hume suggests that if we wish to influence a person (and here he follows a long rhetorical tradition going back at least to Quintilian), “’twill commonly be better policy to work upon the violent than the calm passions, and rather take him by his inclination, than what is vulgarly called his reason” (*THN* 2.3.4).

To summarize, while both calm and violent passions influence the will, the violent (i.e. passions proper) are usually more potent. Hume says that both pursue good and avoid evil, and both are increased or reduced by the relative increase or diminution of good or evil. The relative proximity of the object of the passion determines its “violence”: “The same good, when near, will cause a violent passion, which, when remote, produces only a calm one” (*THN* 2.3.4). In *THN* 2.3.8, Hume concludes that:

Both the causes and effects of these violent and calm passions are pretty variable, and depend, in a great measure, on the peculiar temper and disposition of every individual. ... What makes this whole affair more uncertain, is, that a calm passion may easily be changed into a violent one, either by a change of temper, or of the circumstances and situation of the object, as by the borrowing of force from any attendant passion, by custom, or by exciting the imagination.

Of course, as we saw in our first quotation, Hume also allows that a violent passion can “decay” into a “soft” emotion.

Hume’s account is telegraphic but does indeed seem to be inspired by Hutcheson’s distinction between the calm (benevolent) affections and the particular (affections and) passions. The relevant passage demands to be quoted *in extenso*:

There is a Distinction to be observed on this Subject, between the calm Desire of Good, and Aversion to Evil, either selfish or publick, as it appears to our Reason or Reflection; and the particular Passions towards Objects immediately presented to some Sense. Thus

nothing can be more distinct than the general calm Desire of private Good of any kind, which alone would incline us to pursue whatever Objects were apprehended as the Means of Good, and the particular selfish Passions, such as Ambition, Covetousness, Hunger, Lust, Revenge, Anger, as they arise upon particular Occasions. In like manner, our publick Desires may be distinguished into the general calm Desire of the Happiness of others, or Aversion to their Misery upon Reflection; and the particular Affections or Passions of Love, Congratulation, Compassion, natural Affection. These particular Affections are found in many Tempers, where, thro' want of Reflection, the general calm Desires are not found: Nay, the former may be opposite to the latter, where they are found in same Temper. We obtain Command over the particular Passions, principally by strengthening the general Desires thro frequent Reflection, and making them habitual, so as to obtain Strength superior to the particular Passions.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike Brumoy, Hume does not sort the passions proper (love, anger, pride, envy...) into separate categories of calm/mild and violent/vehement, but seems to envisage them existing on a continuum with the calm, reflective impressions. That is, the same emotions are “calm” to the extent that they are less perceptible, apparently more aligned with reason, “violent” to the extent that they are more intrusive, intense, and compelling.

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Whatever the proximate influences may be for Hume's account, each of these eighteenth-century thinkers is in fact participating in a long tradition of distinguishing between calm and

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<sup>10</sup> “Of the Affections and Passions: The natural Laws of pure Affection: The confused Sensations of the Passions, with their final Cause”, from *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (We have used the Liberty Fund online edition (London, 1742): <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/hutcheson-an-essay-on-the-nature-and-conduct-of-the-passions-and-affections-1742-2002>).



violent emotions, or between calmness and violence within affective states.<sup>11</sup> While we are unable here to deal with the instances of this distinction in all the various disciplinary contexts where it may be manifest in the western intellectual tradition, a preliminary examination of the distinction as it appears in the rhetorical tradition, which at times converges with philosophical discussions as well, will illuminate the ways in which it was long important as a way of classifying affective states.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, while many writers discuss violence or vehemence with respect to the emotions, which might imply that they understand them on a scale of calmness and violence, we are only here attending to those authors that we are aware of who make an explicit categorical distinction between calm and violent or mild and vehement emotion.<sup>13</sup> Finally, while we do not doubt that modern thinkers like Hume are indebted (directly or indirectly) to the rhetorical, and indeed poetic and dramatic, traditions in this regard, our main purpose here is not to establish such dependence, but rather to provide a partial genealogical account from antiquity to the modern period that will be useful for historians of emotion in its own right. We hope that such an account demonstrates the usefulness of the history of emotions broadly in the history of scholarship, and that interdisciplinary approaches are fundamentally important for intellectual history.

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<sup>11</sup> We use the term “emotions” occasionally here aware of the risks of anachronism, but also out of convenience on the understanding that there is very little consistency in the employment of emotion terms in the long history from Quintilian to Hume, irrespective of the language under consideration. See further Kirk Essary, “Passions, Emotions, or Affections? On the Ambiguity of Sixteenth-Century Terminology,” in *Emotion Review* (2017) 1-8.

<sup>12</sup> We must defer to a future occasion(s) the investigation of medical and ethnographic literature, in which calm and violent passions were sometimes assigned to different genders, ages, temperaments, nations, and occupations; of religious texts, e.g. preaching manuals and discussions of Christ’s experience of human passions; and of the fortunes of the calm and violent/ weaker/stronger passions in early modern and eighteenth-century dramatic and aesthetic theory, e.g. with reference to genre decorum and in the context of the sublime.

<sup>13</sup> The distinction has various similar and related taxonomies, for example the Stoic invocation of *eupatheiai* as conducive to *constantia* versus the passionate overthrowing of reason, or the influential Thomist division of the lower part of the souls faculties into concupiscible and irascible appetites. Neither of these, however, can be perfectly mapped onto the calm/violent distinction. On Stoic *eupatheiai* and a partial look at its legacy into the medieval period, see Peter King, “Dispassionate Passions,” in *Emotion & Cognitive Life in Medieval & Early Modern Philosophy*, eds. Martin Pickave and Lisa Shapiro (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9-31. On Aquinas on the passions, see e.g. Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions* (Cambridge, 2009).

## Calm and Violent Emotion in Roman Antiquity

Early explicit formulations of the distinction between the calm and violent passions are to be found in the Roman rhetoricians Cicero and Quintilian. In his *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero makes a distinction relevant to our overall scheme in his exposition of the matter in Greek philosophy: “Now, what the Greeks call the *pathe*, I prefer to translate as ‘emotions,’ rather than ‘sicknesses.’ In treating of these emotions, I shall preserve the familiar distinction made long ago by Pythagoras and later by Plato. They make a division of the mind into two parts, one of which has a share in reason, while the other does not. In the part which has a share in reason they put tranquility (that is, a calm and quiet consistency); in the other, the turbulent motions of anger and desire, which are opposed to reason and inimical to it.”<sup>14</sup> Here, then, we find the rather common ancient notion that the passions in general are problematic especially insofar as they impinge upon reason, which latter functions best in situations of *tranquillitas*. This tradition forms the backdrop of the majority of prominent western discussions of calmness and violence with respect to reason and the passions until the modern period. Note, however, that Cicero’s distinction, while relevant, is not precisely between two types of emotion, but between two psychological faculties. It would seem that we have to wait for Quintilian for a clear and proper categorical distinction between the calm and violent emotions.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, while Cicero is simultaneously expositing the Stoics, Platonists, Pythagoreans, and Epicureans (in invoking *tranquillitas* as a psychological ideal), Quintilian—though to some extent indebted to Cicero himself—takes his departure point on our subject from Aristotle.

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<sup>14</sup> *Tusc. Disp.* IV.10; quoted in Margaret Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 and 4* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), 43.

<sup>15</sup> There is something of a debate about the matter of identifying *ethos* with the milder passions in Cicero. Solmsen (1941, 179) argues that *ethos* is a kind of gentle affection for Cicero, while Wisse (1989, 240–41) demurs. Perhaps George Kennedy puts it best in suggesting that Cicero “regards *ethos* as consisting in presentation of the gentler emotions” (1972, 222). This would seem to be different from identifying it as a type or class of emotion. For a full discussion, see the recent doctoral thesis by Javier Gomez Gil, “La Retorica del *Vir Bonus*: El *Ethos* del Orador y Los *Lenes Affectus* en el *De Oratore* de Ciceron” (Universidad Zaragoza, 2015). We are grateful to David Konstan for bringing this dissertation to our notice.

In Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, the distinction between the calm and violent emotions is subsumed under a broader division, taken from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, between *ethos* and *pathos*. While the rhetorical force of the distinction does not carry all the same valences as, say, Hume's philosophical discussion of it, we see that there are a number of relevant attendant issues that originated in these earlier works and which may have percolated up to Hume. Quintilian's discussion of *ethos* and *pathos* in the *Institutio Oratoria* is in part concerned with the rhetorical tactics that stem ultimately from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, namely defining *ethos* as it relates to "character," and *pathos* as it relates to the emotions.<sup>16</sup> However, Quintilian also writes that *ethe* are *types* of emotion as well, and not only rough equivalents of Aristotelian *hexeis* (or *habitus* in Quintilian's Latin).<sup>17</sup> It is the affective valence of *ethos* that we are concerned with here, as this is for our purposes the salient feature which sets Quintilian's account apart from Aristotle's, and which will come to have direct influence in Renaissance discussions of the calm and violent passions. Quintilian writes in Book VI:

Emotions however, as we learn from ancient authorities, fall into two classes; the one is called *pathos* by the Greeks and is rightly and correctly expressed in Latin by *adfectus*: the other is called *ethos*, a word for which in my opinion Latin has no equivalent: it is however rendered by *mores* and consequently the branch of philosophy known as *ethics* is styled *moral* philosophy by us. But close consideration of the nature of the

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<sup>16</sup> For the distinction in Aristotle, see *Rhetoric* II, xii-xvii on *ethe*; and II i-xi on *pathe*. *Ethos* can be determinative of *pathos* in Aristotle, as for example in the case of young men who by nature have strong passions (see II, xii). Aristotle does discuss the difference between calmness and anger, friendliness and enmity, shame and shamelessness (etc.) at II, ii, 3-6, and this discussion is relevant for our longer story. Indeed, the notion of calm passions as virtuous is a fundamental tenet of Aristotle's ethics of emotion, and this would come to have substantial influence on the history of the philosophy of emotion, especially as an alternative to more rigid forms of Stoicism.

<sup>17</sup> For a distinction between *habitus* and *affectio* in Cicero, see *De Inventione* I.25, and for his discussion of *ethe* and *pathe*, see *De Oratore* 37.128. On gentle and vehement styles, and their relationship to the emotions, see *De Orat.* 38-44.216. For Aristotle's discussion of the distinction between *pathos* and *hexis*, see Nic. Eth. 1105b19-1106a13.

subject leads me to think that in this connexion it is not so much *morals* in general that is meant as certain peculiar aspects; for the term morals includes every habit of the mind.<sup>18</sup>

Quintilian thus wishes to narrow down *ethos* so that it more properly covers a type (in Latin, *species*) of *affectus* rather than having it include every mental *habitus*. He goes on to suggest that *mores* is in this way too broad a term, for it has a semantic range that expands far beyond the emotional, and he then draws a distinction between the calm and violent passions:

The more cautious writers have preferred to give the sense of the term rather than to translate it into Latin. They therefore explain *pathos* as describing the more violent emotions and *ethos* as designating those which are calm and gentle: in the one case the passions are violent, in the other subdued, the former command and disturb, the latter persuade and induce a feeling of goodwill. Some add that *ethos* is continuous, while *pathos* is momentary.<sup>19</sup>

Thus we have here a clear distinction between the “calm” (*lenes*) emotions and the “vehement/violent” (*vehementes*) ones. Quintilian further suggests that *ethos* and *pathos* are “sometimes of the same nature, differing only in degree,” as in the case of *caritas* and *amor* (the former falling under the category of *ethos*, the latter *pathos*).<sup>20</sup> Examples of *ethos* along these lines are exhibited in the relationship of a father to his son, a guardian to his ward, and the *moderatio* displayed by a husband to his wife (all are examples of *caritas*).<sup>21</sup> Love (*amor*) for

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<sup>18</sup> *Inst.* VI.2.8-9 (trans. Butler, modified; emphasis in original): Horum autem, sicut antiquitus traditum accepimus, duae sunt species: alteram Graeci pathos vocant, quod nos vertentes recte ac proprie adfectum dicimus, alteram ethos, cuius nomine, ut ego quidem sentio, caret sermo Romanus: mores appellantur, atque inde pars quoque illa philosophiae ethike moralis est dicta. Sed ipsam rei naturam spectanti mihi non tam mores significari videntur quam morum quaedam proprietas; nam ipsis quidem omnis habitus mentis continetur.

<sup>19</sup> *Inst.* VI.2.9-10: Cautiores voluntatem complecti quam nomina interpretari maluerunt. Adfectus igitur hos concitatos, illos mites atque compositos esse dixerunt: in altero vehementes motus, in altero lenes, denique hos imperare, illos persuadere, hos ad perturbationem, illos ad benivolentiam praevalere. X. Adiciunt quidam ethos perpetuum, pathos temporale esse.

<sup>20</sup> *Inst.* VI.2.12: Quin illud adhuc adicio, pathos atque ethos esse interim ex eadem natura, ita ut illud maius sit, hoc minus, ut amor pathos, caritas ethos

<sup>21</sup> *Inst.* VI.2.14: Sed tamen alia patris adversus filium, tutoris adversus pupillum, mariti adversus uxorem moderatio est (hi enim praeferunt eorum ipsorum a quibus laeduntur caritatem, neque alio modo invisos

friends falls somewhere in the middle, it being stronger than *ethos* but weaker than *pathos*.<sup>22</sup>

*Ethos* is not only gentle and calm (*mite ac placidum*), but also incites pleasure and delight (*amabile atque iucundum*).

*Pathos* is less subtle than *ethos* in Quintilian's scheme. *Pathos* relates to the so-called basic emotions, "almost entirely concerned with anger, dislike, fear, hatred, and pity."<sup>23</sup> The most apt way to compare the two, for Quintilian, is by invoking the difference between comedy and tragedy.<sup>24</sup> The task of the orator in moving these emotions is "not merely to slew the bitter and grievous nature of ills that actually are so, but also to make ills which are usually regarded as tolerable seem unendurable, as for instance when we represent insulting words as inflicting more grievous injury than an actual blow or represent disgrace as being worse than death."<sup>25</sup> While *ethos* is employed by the orator in typically calm and even light-hearted situations (it is the province of irony, for example, Quintilian says), *pathos* pertains to situations where the audience needs to be more violently and perhaps only temporarily stirred. In many ways Quintilian is simply following Cicero here from *De Oratore* (37.128 and 43.212, e.g.), who distinguishes the *ethikon* from the *pathetikon* as delightful and violent respectively. Indeed, even though Cicero does not quite seem to identify *ethe* with the gentle emotions, it is important to note that he does make a distinction between the milder and more vehement modes in the context of his discussion of *ethos* and *pathos*, and between gentle and vehement style in the *De Oratore*, and this could certainly have influenced Quintilian's account.<sup>26</sup> (Indeed, Nicolas

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eos faciunt quam quod amare ipsi videntur), alia cum senex adulescentis alieni convicium, honestus inferioris fert; hic enim tantum concitari, illic etiam adfici debet.

<sup>22</sup> *Inst.* VI.2.17.

<sup>23</sup> *Inst.* VI.2.20: Haec pars circa iram odium metum invidiam miserationem fere tota versatur

<sup>24</sup> *Inst.* VI.2.20: Diversum est huic quod pathos dicitur quodque nos adfectum proprie vocamus, et, ut proxime utriusque differentiam signem, illud comoediae, hoc tragoediae magis simile.

<sup>25</sup> *Inst.* VI.2.23: Interim notasse contentus sum non id solum agere adfectus, ut quae sunt ostendantur acerba ac luctuosa, sed etiam ut quae toleranda haberi solent gravia videantur, ut cum in maledicto plus iniuriae quam in manu, in infamia plus poenae dicimus quam in morte.

<sup>26</sup> *Orat.* 37.128, for example, reads: Duo restant enim, quae bene tractata ab oratore admirabilem eloquentiam faciunt. Quorum alterum est, quod Graeci *ethikon* vocant, ad naturas et ad mores et ad omnem vitae consuetudinem accommodatum; alterum, quod idem *pathetikon* nominant, quo perturbantur animi et concitantur, in quo uno regnat oratorio. Illud superius come iucundum, ad benevolentiam

Caussin, the 17<sup>th</sup>-century French Jesuit, attributes the distinction to Cicero, not Quintilian.<sup>27</sup>) But Quintilian's overt and clear description of *ethe* as a type of *affectus* distinguishes him from his predecessors (both Cicero and Aristotle), and this distinction finds its way into Renaissance conceptions of emotion.<sup>28</sup>

### **Calm and Violent Emotion in Renaissance Rhetoric**

Quintilian's influence through the Middle Ages is still rather unclear, but we do know that manuscript versions of his works (at least ten editions, not all complete) circulated to some extent.<sup>29</sup> A complete eleventh-century manuscript of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* was discovered in 1416 by Poggio Bracciolini at the monastery of St. Gallen, and this would eventually give rise to widespread appreciation of him in the Renaissance.<sup>30</sup> According to Nancy van Deusen, at least thirty printed editions came off the press from 1470 to 1591.<sup>31</sup> In the sixteenth century the reception of Quintilian is thus more readily discernible (and often quite explicit), and the distinction he makes between the mild and violent emotions makes its way into rhetorical handbooks, preaching manuals, and treatises on the soul in this period.

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conciliandam paratum; hoc vehemens incensum incitatum, quo causae eripiuntur: quod cum rapide fertur, sustineri nullo pacto potest.

<sup>27</sup> Alii motus sunt leniores, quos ethikois Cicero nominat; alii vehementiores, qui pathetikoi appellantur; Et si recta rationem excedant, animae oikonomian, adversis veluti ventis labefactant, et divellunt (*De eloquentia* VIII.2, Paris 1630, fol. 460).

<sup>28</sup> Lorenzo Casini also points this out in his essay on Vives; see "Emotions in Renaissance Humanism," in *Emotions and Choice from Boethius to Descartes* (ed. Lagerlund and Yrjonsuri; Kluwer, 2002), 212.

<sup>29</sup> On the medieval manuscript tradition and early incunabula printing tradition of the *Institutio Oratoria*, see Nancy van Deusen, *Cicero Refused to Die: Ciceronian Influence through the Centuries* (Brill, 2013), 47-48. On Quintilian's influence on medieval and Renaissance rhetoric, see John O. Ward, "Quintilian and the Rhetorical Revolution of the Middle Ages," in *Rhetorica* 13:3 (1995), 231-284, and idem. "Cicero and Quintilian," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, III: The Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1999), 77-87. Also see John Monfasani, "Episodes of Anti-Quintilianism in the Italian Renaissance: Quarrels on the Orator as a *Vir Bonus* and Rhetoric as the *Scientia Bene Dicendi*," in *Rhetorica* 10:2 (1992), 119-138.

<sup>30</sup> See van Deusen, 48n2.

<sup>31</sup> *Cicero Refused to Die*, 47.

Erasmus of Rotterdam, perhaps the most prominent popularizer of Quintilian's rhetorical ideas, takes up Quintilian's distinction between the calm and vehement passions and elaborates on it in his own way on multiple occasions. In his rhetorical handbook, *De Copia* (1512), a work widely and often printed and translated, he writes: "The more violent emotions, which the Greeks call *pathe* are to be discovered in Homer's *Iliad* and in tragedy; the calmer ones, which are pleasant rather than disturbing, are supplied by Homer's *Odyssey* and by comedy. Yet *ethe*, which is what the Greeks call the emotions of comedy, are often interspersed in the *Iliad* and Greek tragedy. Latin tragedy makes rather sparing use of them."<sup>32</sup> Erasmus goes on, in the *Copia*, to give examples from Homer, Horace, and Cicero of pleasant and delightful emotions. A particularly pleasing scene, according to Erasmus, comes in the *Iliad* where Andromache runs to meet Hector who is leaving for battle: the plume on Hector's helmet frightens their child, which results in laughter and simultaneously in Andromache "smiling through her tears." The scene for Erasmus elicits immense pleasure, and is also an instance of "mixed emotion," given Andromache's laughter at the reaction of the child and her tears at her husband's departing for battle.<sup>33</sup>

In the *Ecclesiastes sive de ratione concionandi* (1535), an enormous manual for preachers and his last major work, Erasmus expands his discussion of the distinction and in fact reverses Quintilian's explanation of the Latin terminology:

It is generally agreed that there are two kinds of emotions, one gentler and more like those of comedy, the other more powerful and tragic, and nothing forbids positing a middle ground between these, as I see Quintilian did. The Greeks call the former *ethe*, the Latins *mores*. The Greeks call the latter *pathe*; since the Latins did not devise a

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<sup>32</sup> CWE 24, 654. Erasmus makes the same distinction, with reference to Quintilian, in the adage *Tragicum Malum* (Adag. IV iii 40; see LB II 1014C, and CWE 36:27), in the *Ratio Verae Theologiae* (Holborn, 187), and in the *Ecclesiastes* as discussed below. See also the *De Ratione Studii* (CWE 24:687f.) where Erasmus discusses characters from Terence's comedies in relation to this distinction.

<sup>33</sup> In the *Panegyricus*, Erasmus describes Andromache's tears as a sign of "grief's laughter," and further glosses it as an instance of sardonic laughter (CWE 24, 654-55), which latter itself constitutes a lengthy entry in his *Adages* (III v 1 in CWE 35:63).

specific word for them, some misuse the name of a genus for a species and call them ‘emotions,’ others ‘perturbations’ or ‘movements of the soul,’ others ‘desires,’ others ‘diseases.’ Yet neither *ethos* in Greek nor *mores* in Latin strictly speaking denotes what we mean here, inasmuch as *ethe* in Greek are the *mores* on the basis of which we are said to be, and are, good or bad; but that word has been distorted both by them and by us for didactic purposes, so that it signifies the common and more moderate emotions by which everyone is affected because they are natural and that are recognized by everyone and cause delight rather than disturbance.<sup>34</sup>

Erasmus is aware that Quintilian and others are technically taking liberties in describing *ethos* as a kind of emotion, but finds the distinction useful nonetheless for distinguishing emotions which delight (*delectent*) from those which disturb (*perturbent*), the same functional distinction Quintilian had made earlier. Erasmus gives a series of examples, as Quintilian had, of calm emotions and related “ethical” dispositions: love of parents for their children and “the greater severity of uncles towards their nephews” are types of gentle affections, while more properly related to *ethos* qua character would be vanity in females, cruelty in males, “in soldiers lavish spending and boasting,” “in an Italian politeness and learning, in a German zeal for war,” and so on.<sup>35</sup> The latter sort of *ethe* are closely related to what Erasmus elsewhere in this work calls “temperaments” (*natura animi* and *habitus animi*), which he distinguishes from emotion

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<sup>34</sup> CWE 68:792, modified; ASD V-5, 68: Constat autem imprimis duplex esse affectuum genus, alterum mitius et quasi comicum, alterum vehementius ac tragicum. Nec quicquam vetat inter hos collocare medium, quod a Fabio factum video. Prius illud Graeci vocant *ethe*, Latini mores. Posterius hoc Graeci *pathe* vocant, Latini quoniam propriam vocem non inveniunt, alii generali nomine abutentes pro specie vocant ‘affectus’, alii ‘perturbationes’ aut ‘motus animorum’, alii cupiditates’, alii ‘morbos’. Quanquam nec *ethos* Graecis, nec mores Latinis hoc proprie sonant, quod hic sentimus. Siquidem *ethe* Graecis mores sunt, a quibus boni malive dicimur et sumus. Sed ea vox ut illis ita et nobis deflexa est docendi gratia, ut declaret affectus communes ac moderatiores, quibus nemo non afficitur, quod sint secundum naturam et ab omnibus agnoscantur ac delectent verius quam perturbent.

<sup>35</sup> See CWE 68:792-93. For an interesting later example of such ethnic affective profiling, see the *Icon animorum* of the Scottish Latin novelist and satirist, John Barclay (1582-1621). The Scots, e.g., are prone to anger but their rage is quickly mitigated (4. 23); the Italians’ “hatred ... will outlast an age and – which is the most mischievous – their minds are never so easily wounded as obstinate in bearing the lasting scar” (6.8) (transl. Mark Riley, *Icon Animorum or The Mirror of Minds* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013)).



(*commotio*) in that temperament is constant while emotion is temporary, “so that anger is the emotion, irascibility the temperament, and fear is the emotion, fearfulness the temperament.”<sup>36</sup> It should, perhaps, be mentioned that this sort of distinction is not alien to Hume's account, for he counts things like “natural instincts of benevolence” and “kindness to children” in his category of the calm passions.<sup>37</sup>

Earlier in the *Ecclesiastes*, Erasmus had written that Livy and Virgil are apt at treating the gentler emotions, and that the Roman tragedians were more forceful than the Greeks in treating the more violent ones.<sup>38</sup> Here, as elsewhere, Erasmus locates the common use of the gentler emotions in comedy, which he says ultimately derives from Homer's *Odyssey* and which itself contains an abundance of such references, but he also finds this use of emotion in, for example, the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 (“indeed, a comedy of some elegance could be woven from it”).<sup>39</sup> Erasmus then points to Quintilian's distinction between *caritas* and *amor* as useful for distinguishing *ethe* from *pathe*. And as examples of “the sort of violent passion that tortures us and deprives us of judgment and peace of mind,” which is a gloss on *pathos*, he gives Phaedra's love for Hippolytus, Medea's of Jason, and Dido's towards Aeneas. “The principal emotions of this kind,” he writes, “are pity, indignation, love, and hate.”<sup>40</sup> None of these emotions, moreover, to Erasmus' way of thinking, is necessarily worse than any other, but it rather depends upon circumstance. Hatred, for example, may be kindled in the congregation by

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<sup>36</sup> CWE 78:616; ASD V-4, 372.

<sup>37</sup> See *T* 2.3.3.8, and Radcliffe, “Hume's Psychology of the Passions,” 569 and 588.

<sup>38</sup> CWE 68:490; ASD V-4, 265: Idem [i.e., Livy] in mitioribus affectibus, quos Graeci vocant mores, iucundus est, quemadmodum et Virgilius. Acriores affectus petuntur a tragicis, quanquam Latini, qui quidem extant, plus hic habent vehementiae quam Graeci.

<sup>39</sup> CWE 68:793.

<sup>40</sup> CWE 68:794; ASD V-5, 72: amorem inter *pathe*, qua voce putat declarari vehementem affectum, qui nos discruciet ac iudicium mentisque tranquillitatem eripiat, qualem fingunt Phaedrae in Hippolytum, Medae in Iasonem, Didonis in Aeneam... Huius generis affectus praecipui sunt misericordia, indignatio, amor, et odium.

the preacher, but against vice and not against another person. Meanwhile *caritas Christianae* is to be inflamed in every possible way.<sup>41</sup>

Erasmus recognizes that certain rhetorical tactics, like the use of vivid narration or *hypotyposis*, are better for eliciting strong emotions than others. That said, in the context of the preacher's duty to teach Christian virtue, he is more effective if he avoids emotions which are temporarily vehement: the preacher is to move not the "temporary emotions which cool quickly," but the longer-lasting emotions that lead to piety.<sup>42</sup> We would seem to be justified in mapping this onto the distinction between the vehement and mild passions, given what Erasmus says later:

Secular rhetoricians have also wisely perceived that one should not dwell too long on those violent emotions that shake a person completely but should descend from them gradually to more moderate ones, just as one ought not to rush into them suddenly; for nature does not allow anything that is exceptional to continue for long. It is not even expedient to stir up the feelings of one's hearers frequently and immoderately, for, just as the body is hardened by constant blows, as happens to slaves, so the mind may be hardened from excessively frequent and bitter displays of emotionalism.<sup>43</sup>

In this case Erasmus provides a prescriptive account of the violent or sharp (*acer*) emotions, which are identified with short-lived passions, and which ought to give way to the more moderate (*moderatiores*) passions in sacred oratory. Erasmus has thus taken Quintilian's distinction and adapted it to the rhetorical context of the Christian sermon, and authors of other early modern sacred rhetorics, both Protestant and Catholic, would follow suit.

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<sup>41</sup> ASD V-5, 80.

<sup>42</sup> See, e.g., CWE 68:806.

<sup>43</sup> CWE 68:811; ASD V-5, 92: Illud etiam huius mundi rhetores sapienter perspexerunt, acribus illis affectibus, qui totum hominem concutiunt, non esse diutius immorandum, sed quemadmodum non oportet ad illos subito prorumpere, ita sensim ab illis ad moderatiores descendendum. Nec enim natura fert, ut quae summa sunt, sint diutina. Ne expedit quidem frequenter et immodice concitare animos auditorum, ne quemadmodum ad assidua verbera corpus serviliter obdurescit, ita mens nimium acribus, nimiumque crebris commotionibus obrigescat.

Andreas Hyperius, for example, who published his *De formandis concionibus sacris* first in 1553, writes that the vehement and mild emotions should be roused by the preacher at different times, depending on the rhetorical circumstance.<sup>44</sup> Like Erasmus, however (and probably following him), Hyperius argues that the vehement affections should not be encouraged for too long, but that the preacher should assiduously rouse the gentler emotions. As the 1577 English translation renders Hyperius:

Furthermore, where the Orators bee of opinion that it is not good to sticke longe, especially in the affections that are ouer vehemente, in that pointe wee also assente vnto them: seeinge the thinges that are ouer vehement can in no wise bee of any longe continuance. But as for the gentiller sort of affections, to disperse them through euery parte of the Sermon, it is very seemely and profitable for the *Oration* yt always creepeth lowe by the ground and neuer at any time mounteth vup by a lofte or waxeth hote, it is very lyke that such a one will bringe tediousness & bee disliked of the hearers.<sup>45</sup>

In sacred rhetoric, the distinction between the vehement and calm passions comes to have important significance for the ways in which the preacher might best persuade the congregation and encourage them to virtue. Lingering too long on tactics that move violently may have short-term gain but not the desired lasting effects.

### **The Distinction in Early Modern Treatises on the Passions**

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<sup>44</sup> *De formandis concionibus* (Basel, 1563), fol. 95: Itaque hunc ipsum scies ita tibi explicandum, ut affectus commovere seu vehementiores seu mitiores, quantum expedire videris, studeas.

<sup>45</sup> *De formandis concionibus* (Basel, 1563), fol. 113: Quod oratores praeterea censuerunt adfectibus, praesertim vehementioribus, non esse diu inhaerendum, in eo nos ipsis assentimur: quando diuturna esse nullo possunt modo, quae sunt vehementia. Mitiores autem adfectus per singulas misceri concionum partes cumprimis decorum atque utile est. Quae namque oratio semper repit, neque usquam assurgit vel incalescit, eam verosimile est taedium adferre, atque improbari ab auditoribus.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw a proliferation of treatises on the passions or treatments of the passions within treatises on the soul in several European languages, and in these works we find a shift from a properly rhetorical context to a more recognizably “psychological” (whether theological, generally moral, or medical) one in analyses of the emotions.<sup>46</sup> And yet the distinction between the calm and violent passions continues to play an important role in the categorization of and deliberation on the significance of affectivity, and many of the features of the rhetorical tradition are carried over into these treatises as well.

Outside the context of sacred rhetoric, but still falling on the trajectory of Quintilian’s distinction, for example, is the influential treatise, *De anima et vita*, by Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives, first published in 1538. Vives, an early devotee and long time colleague of Erasmus, may be the first thinker to take Quintilian’s distinction out of a rhetorical context and integrate it into a treatise on the passions.<sup>47</sup> Invoking a common metaphor from the period, Vives compares the vehement and gentle passions to violent and calm seas:

Just as in the motions of the sea one motion is a soft breeze, one stronger, and another vehement as a horrible tempest that stirs up the whole sea from the depths together with the sand and the fishes; so in the motions of the soul some are light, so that you might almost call them beginnings of a rising motion, some more intense, and others shake up the whole soul and drive it away from the seat of reason and state of judgment. These are real disturbances and unrestrained motions, since now the soul is practically not in control of itself, but becomes subject to an alien power, blinded and unable to see anything. The former you might rightly call emotions, while the latter are the

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<sup>46</sup> For an overview of treatises on the emotions in this period, see the still quite helpful Harry Gardiner, *Feeling and Emotion: A History of Theories* (New York: American Book Company, 1937).

<sup>47</sup> For background on the eventually fraught relationship between Vives and Erasmus, see Carlos Noreña, “Was Juan Luis Vives a Disciple of Erasmus?” in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 7:3 (1969), 263-272.

commotions and agitations that the Greeks call *pathe*, i.e., passions, since the whole soul suffers this blow and becomes agitated.<sup>48</sup>

One often salient feature of the violent passions is that they overwhelm the entire person and, most problematically for many thinkers, that they overwhelm reason (as we see is hinted at by Hume later on). We saw Erasmus above describe the sharper emotions as “violently shaking the whole person” (*concutiunt totum hominem*). Here Vives uses the same verb to describe the tempestuous movements that shake up the whole soul (*concutiunt universum animum*) and unhinge reason. In the long history of rhetorical theory this may be either a good or a bad thing, depending on the orator’s audience and purposes, but by and large it is something to be avoided in the heritage of the western philosophical traditions. Vives here teases out the etymology of the Greek *pathe*, suggesting that the more violent emotions might better be labelled *passiones* because the entire soul suffers (*patitur*) when it experiences them. He also seems to toy with the idea of equating the calmer (*leves*) emotions—note that he doesn’t actually refer to the Greek term *ethe*—with what the Stoics called “propassions” (*propassiones, propatheiai*): in Vives’ words they are the beginnings of a rising movement (*initia surgentis motus*) in the soul.<sup>49</sup>

Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560), the Lutheran humanist and theologian, also makes the distinction between *ethe* and *pathe* in his *Elementa rhetorices* of 1519 and again in his 1552 *Liber de anima*. In the first work, he reproduces Quintilian’s distinction (no doubt he had also read Erasmus’ *De copia*), distinguishing between *ethe* as *affectus leniores* and *pathe* as *affectus*

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<sup>48</sup> Trans. Lorenzo Casini (in “Emotions in Renaissance Humanism”): At vero, quemadmodum in maris motibus est alius aurae tenuis, alius concitator, alius vehemens, quique horrida tempestate mare omne a fundo verrat cum arena ipsa et piscibus: sic in his animorum agitationibus quaedam sunt leves, quas velut initia quaedam dixeris surgentis motus: aliae sunt validiores, aliae animum universum concutiunt, deque rationis sede ac statu iudicii depellunt, quae vere sunt perturbationes, et impotentiae: quod quasi iam animus sui non sit compos, sed in alienam potestatem reciderit, et caecitates, quod nihil despiciat. Nam primas illas, affectiones rectius dixeris: alteras, commotiones, seu concitationes, quae Graeci *pathe* nominant, quasi *passiones*, patitur enim animus universus illo velut ictu et agitato.

<sup>49</sup> Erasmus, it may be pointed out, contending with Jerome, rejects the propassions as a valid way of interpreting Christ’s emotional agony at Gethsemane, and is happy to interpret the scene as Christ’s emotions (*passiones*) violently overwhelming his mind (*vehementissime perturbavit mentem*); see the *De taedio Iesu* at ASD V-1, 252 (CWE 70:56).

*vehementiores*.<sup>50</sup> Melanchthon had also read Vives by the time he wrote the *Liber de anima*, but he takes the distinction between violent and calm passions from the rhetorical tradition and adapts it to different aspects of his understanding of the soul. The *Liber de anima* is a long and complex work, and Melanchthon painstakingly analyzes various aspects of the soul (including the emotions) from several angles, bringing together an impressive array of disciplines. It provides good examples of the kinds of nuances that may attend the distinction between violent and calm passions when employed in various contexts. Melanchthon mentions *ethe* and *pathe* explicitly, and also distinguishes between the emotions which “aid nature” (*iuvant naturam*) and those which disrupt or destroy it (*destruunt naturam*).<sup>51</sup> Those which aid nature are joy, hope, and love, while those which are destructive of it are sadness, fear, anger, and hatred. These have physical correlates to motions surrounding the heart (which is the *fons et sedes affectuum*), and related to the nerves of the brain, causing delight on the one hand (e.g. in joy) and pain on the other (e.g. in sadness) depending on dilating and restricting blood-flow around the heart.<sup>52</sup> Vehement and mild emotions can also result from certain predispositions based on humoral balance for Melanchthon, who in this treatise is at pains to integrate Aristotle, Galen, the new Vesalian anatomy, and Christian theological notions concerning the soul and its affections.<sup>53</sup>

In his discussion of the aspects of the will, Melanchthon says a few things relevant to our theme. He writes that there are, in the will, four sorts of movement: innate inclinations, actions, habits, and affections.<sup>54</sup> Actions, or movements, are closely related to *habitus*, in that they are “enduring” (*firmos impetus*), and they might also be identified with virtue and vice. Emotions (*adfectus ethe et pathe*) are types of actions, but which are joined with a kind of pain or

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<sup>50</sup> *Elementa rhetorices* (CR 13, 454): Nam alii affectus sunt leniores, qui vocantur *ethe*, qui blandis verbis efferuntur, quae significationem humanitatis atque officii praebent... Alii sunt affectus vehementiores, qui dicuntur *pathe*. In hic utendum est atrocibus et tragicis verbis.

<sup>51</sup> CR 13, 126.

<sup>52</sup> CR 13, 126: Praeterea sensus fit acrior, quia subtiles nervi a cerebro deducti sunt in corpus cordis, qui addunt delectationem laetitia, et acerrimos dolores tristitia.

<sup>53</sup> See, e.g., CR 13, 82 ff. Aquinas had also discussed vehemence of emotionality in a humoral context (see *ST* II-II. Q155, 156).

<sup>54</sup> CR 13, 167. *inclinationes innatae, actiones, habitus, et affectu*.

suffering (*dolor*) or some kind of pleasure or joy (*laetitia*). Some lasting emotions (*adfectus durabiles*) are very like *habitus*, but mixed with sadness (*dolore*) or joy (*laetitia*).<sup>55</sup> As in the distinction made previously, they can “wound nature” or they can delight it.<sup>56</sup> In these descriptions, we see Melancthon’s adaptation of the distinction between *ethe* and *pathe* from rhetorical theory and put into the context of an analysis of the emotions *per se*, and especially as they are inhabited physiologically and even more specifically as they relate to the physical organ of the heart.

The mid-sixteenth-century move from rhetoric to psychological accounts of calm and violent emotions has a lasting effect on treatises into the seventeenth century and beyond. The intimation that calm emotions are similar to the Stoic conception of *propassiones*, hinted at above in Vives’ account, is found explicitly in a prominent seventeenth-century English work on the passions, Edward Reynolds’ *A Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man* (1640). Reynolds was the bishop of Norwich as well as a prominent preacher, but his treatise on the passions aims at philosophical or theological rather than rhetorical ends. In particular, he is at pains to illustrate that the strong Stoic position against the emotions is problematic from a Christian perspective, but at the same time he nevertheless retains the conception of the Stoic *propassiones* as useful for adjudicating the permissibility of emotion in Christian ethics.

Describing Christ as a model affective example, he writes:

There is more honour, in the having Affections subdued, than in having none at all; the businesse of a wise man, is not to be without them, but to be above them. And therefore our Saviour himselfe sometimes loved, sometimes rejoiced, sometimes wept, sometimes desired, sometimes mourned and grieved but these were not Passions that violently and immoderately troubled him; His Reason excited, directed, moderated, repressed them,

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<sup>55</sup> CR 13, 167.

<sup>56</sup> CR 13, 168: *Adfectus est motus cordis aut voluntatis, sequens cognitionem, prosequens aut fugiens objecta, quae cum aut laedant naturam aut delectent, semper comitantur extremi motus, dolor laesa natura, vel suavitas seu laticia fovens naturam.*

according to the rule of perfect, cleare, and undisturbed judgement. In which respect, the Passions of Christ are by Divines called rather Propassions, that is to say, Beginnings of Passions, then Passions themselves; in as much as they never proceeded beyond their due measure, nor transported the Mind to undecencie or excesse; but had both their rising and originall from Reason, and also their measure, bounds, continuance limited by Reason.

While Reynolds' attempt to rescue the passions by grounding the permissible (calm) ones in reason is ostensibly a Stoic move itself, he goes on to reject the Stoics explicitly, further making the distinction between the calm and violent passions, and making clear his preference for the ethical permissibility of the former over the latter:

Those imputations therefore which Tully and Seneca, and other Stoical Philosophers, make against Passions, are but light and empty, when they call them diseases and perturbations of the Mind; which requireth in all its actions both health and serenity, a strong and a clear judgement; both which properties, they say, are impaired by the distempers of Passion: For it is absurd to think, that all manner of rest is either healthful or clear; or on the other side, all motion diseased and troublesome: for, what water more sweet than that of a Spring? or what more thick or loathsome, than that which standeth in a puddle, corrupting itself? As in the Winde or Seas (to which two, Passions are commonly compared) a middle temper between a quiet Calm and a violent Tempest, is most serviceable for the passage between countries; so the agitations of Passion, as long as they serve onely to drive forward, but not to drown Vertue.

Like Vives, Reynolds has invoked the metaphor of a calm and violent storm on the ocean to describe the distinction between types of emotion, but he has gone further than the majority of rhetorical writers in their discussions of this distinction by unequivocally assigning a negative value to the violent passions. In describing the calm passions as more amenable to reason



(though certainly not an idea wholly foreign to our earlier writers), Reynolds anticipates Hume's somewhat more nuanced account of a similar relationship.<sup>57</sup>

Only a year after Reynolds published his treatise in England, the Oratorian Jean-Francois Senault (1599-1672) published *De l'Usage des Passions* (Paris, 1641) across the Channel. In the fourth chapter of this rather lengthy work, entitled 'Quelle est la plus violente des Passions des l'homme?' ("Which is the most violent of all the passions of man?"), Senault takes a different tack. While Senault, like Reynolds (and like most Christian writers discussing the passions in the early modern period), distances himself outright from the Stoics at the beginning of his treatise, having dispatched with them there, he is in this chapter more interested in Plato and Aristotle than in Cicero or Seneca. In particular, Senault's interest is, as the title suggests, in discussing which particular passions is the most violent of all, rather than in elaborating on a distinction between calm and violent passions, but the contents of the chapter are nonetheless worthy of a brief overview.

"Plato hath left us in doubt," he writes (and here we follow the 1671 English translation of Henry, Earl of Monmouth), "and sounding the Question to the bottom, he contents himself with saying, there are four passions which seem to surpass the rest in violence." The four, according to Senault's Plato, are sensual delight (*la volupte*, Voluptuousness), anger (*la cholere*,

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<sup>57</sup> James Fieser has noted that some elements of Reynolds' account anticipate Hume's. See "Hume's Classification of the Passions and Its Precursors," in *Hume Studies* 13:1 (1992), 7. But see Amy Schnitter in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy §7, on Hume's 'reason as slave of the passions': Hume is particularly concerned with analyzing our practical reasoning, our reasoning about how to act. Passions are the engine for all our deeds: without passions we would lack all motivation, all impulse or drive to act, or even to reason (practically or theoretically). This gives at least one sense in which "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions" (T II.3.3 415). Hume also holds that the passions are not themselves directly subject to rational evaluation. In fact, it seems something of a category mistake to think that they could be either rational or irrational. Passions are impressions – strong and lively perceptions with a certain "feel" and a direction, or impulse. Reasoning, however, is a matter of connecting various ideas in order to come to a belief; it may apply to, or even form, the circumstances under which passions arise. But reason can generate no impulse by itself.  
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotions-17th18th/LD8Hume.html#JudTas>

Choler), desire of honor (*desir de l'honneur*), and fear of death (*la crainte de la mort*). Plato, according to Senault, thinks that the first is the most violent: “The first is Voluptuousness (*volupté*), which belies its name, and which breathing forth nothing but sweetness, ceaseth not to be extream furious; and to fight against reason with more violence than doth grief or anguish.” Choler, which though Senault describes it as *excessivement violente* on account of that it is nothing other than a boiling of blood around the heart, nevertheless thinks that it is “more reasonable than Voluptuousness”: “for as Lions are sooner tamed than Fish, an angry man is sooner appeased, than a voluptuous man converted; and experience teaches us that of these two Passions the more mild is the less tractable.” In the end, at any rate, Senault demurs from following Plato and moves on to consider the Peripatetic position: “Though I have a noble esteem of Plato, and that his ravings seem more noble, and more heightened to me than Aristotles Discourses, yet cannot I side with him in this... For Voluptuousness is not so much a particular Passion, as it is the Spring-head of all those that give us any contentment, nor is it so violent, but that it may easily be repress’d by grief and anguish.” Sensual delight, then, does not count as a passion, but rather as an avenue by which passions take hold. This is of interest *en passant* especially in light of a comment made by Descartes, whose treatise on the passions of the soul is published *after* Senault’s (in 1649), and who—though he doesn’t often discuss the calmness and violence of emotions—writes that “passions of attraction and revulsion are usually more violent than the other kinds of love and hatred, because what enters the soul through the senses affects it more strongly than what is represented to it by its reason.”

Anger (or ‘choler’), Senault notes, is often referred to by Aristotle as the most violent of the passions, but Senault is not as convinced that it is thereby the most dangerous: “Choler is indeed the more ardent, but it is not of durance. If it turn not into hatred, the effects thereof are not to be dreaded; ‘tis more sudden violence, and to express its nature, we must say, that it may well do an ill action, but it cannot conceive a mischievous design.” Senault ultimately dismisses the fear of death as “only belonging to the Vulgar,” presumably grounds enough for it not to be

counted among the most violent. Senault goes on to consider jealousy as the most violent (the opinion apparently of many philosophers), but concludes that because it consists of both love and hatred, and because two passions fighting against one another soften the blow, it must of necessity be calmer. In conclusion, he settles, with very little argument, on love as the most violent: “But since after having worsted a Falsehood a Truth must be established, let us say that according to our principles this question is not hard to resolve; for as we acknowledge but one passion, which is Love, and that all the rest are but effects of her producing, we are bound to confess, that they borrow all their efficacy from their Cause; and that they have no other violence than what is hers.”

The question as to which of the passions is strongest is not posed explicitly in the *Cour sainte, ou institution chrestienne des grands* (“Holy Court”) by Senault’s Jesuit contemporary, Nicolas Caussin (1583-1651), sometime confessor to Louis XIII. And yet, to his description of no fewer than fourteen passions in as many “treatises” in the fourth tome (“Empire of Reason over the Passions”) of this frequently printed and translated work, Caussin adds a coda of “historical remarks on the four principal passions, *which are like four demons afflicting the holy court*” (emphasis ours). These “principal passions”, viz. love, desire, anger and envy, are singled out, then, for their powerful (negative) effects, as evinced in exemplary narrative, rather than their ontological status as primary or basic emotions – an index of the interpenetration of rhetorical and philosophical modes of thought and writing in this influential Jesuit moralist.

### **Back to Brumoy: Strong and Weak ~ Short and Long ~ Real and Represented ~ Calm and Violent Passions**

The question of the strongest passion was raised directly by Caussin’s younger confrère, Pierre Brumoy, in his “Plaidoyer *Pour la Paresse*” (“Plea for Idleness”), a somewhat paradoxical appendix to the Latin poem, *De motibus animi*, with which we began this investigation. How,

then, does Brumoy understand the measure of strength in relation to that of mildness/violence of the passions? In the introductory “Lettre a M\*\*\* Sur la question, sçavoir, *De toutes les Passions laquelle est la plus forte*,” Brumoy claims to have participated in a semi-academic debate on this topic some 18-19 years earlier. “Having excluded a number of both calm and violent passions that seemed unfit to enter into a competition for supreme power over the human heart,” Brumoy’s friends, he says, settled on three or four contenders for the title, arguing in turn for love of riches, love of honours, and love of pleasure. However, there was general agreement that:

the Passion which prevails in the heart at a given moment is, at that moment, the strongest. Thus any Passion, even one that was very mild, could be assumed to be the strongest in this respect, *and even more so, especially, if it was Vengeance, or any other violent emotion arising from a Hatred that dominated*. But to remove any ambiguity, the question was simplified and reduced to determining which was most commonly, if not always, the strongest of the Passions. Now that was not Hatred, nor Vengeance, nor, moreover, Love or Friendship, or any other Passion of that kind. These have their limits. One does not hate nor love forever. It costs us too much to hate or love for a long time. The heart is exhausted – to its shame – even in friendship [...] As for Vengeance, one takes revenge – it was added – almost always because of a point of honour. One doesn’t always hate, even though one takes revenge. One forgives at least from that moment when one is avenged. It’s rare that one feeds and lives on Vengeance.<sup>58</sup>

If this debate is not an entirely fictional pretext, and took place nearly two decades before the publication of his didactic poem, Brumoy anticipates here Hume’s clarification of the different

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<sup>58</sup> Our translation and emphasis from *Recueil*, tom. 2, 199-200.

ways in which a passion can be at once violent and weak, calm and strong. The duration of the passion, as in Hume, is key.<sup>59</sup>

Moreover, in one of the three preliminary discourses to his most famous work, the *Théâtre des grecs*, first published in 1730, Brumoy had elaborated on these various distinctions (calm-violent, strong-weak, short-long) in the context of poetic and theatrical representations. In the “Discours sur l’origine de la Tragédie” (which we quote for convenience from the English translation of Charlotte Lennox), he observes that representations of the soft passions are more suited to epic than to dramatic poetry precisely because of their slow-burning nature:

And the principal passions which Homer touches, are all of them conformable to the length of his poem, and to the nature of man, considered in the light of a reader. Joy, curiosity, admiration, and those soft passions, may bind the heart a long time without fatiguing it. On the other hand, terror, indignation, hatred, pity, and a number of other passions, whose vivacity may drain the very soul, are treated in the Iliad in a cursory manner, and always with subordination to the moderate passions which we see reigning throughout the poem. But in a play, which ought not to last a long time, the lively passions may perform their part; and though subaltern in a poem, they may command in a tragedy, without tiring the spectator, who would be apt to doze, were the actions too lingering. This way of reasoning is founded in everything else upon the real nature of passions. A man cannot sustain long a violent agitation. Anger has its transports. Revenge has its rage, but their last clamours are of small duration. If these sensations reside long in the heart, it is like fire stifled under embers. Their flame causes too great a conflagration to be durable. Desire, fright, pity, love, hatred itself, all of them, when carried to the greatest excess, exhaust themselves soon. The violence of a tempest, is the

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<sup>59</sup> See the passage from *THN* 2.3.4 quoted above. Cf. also Senault’s observation on the short duration of choler.

presage of its end. The lively and the short passions, therefore, are the true proper motions to animate the theatre.<sup>60</sup>

It is worth noting that the “soft” (“douces”) passions mentioned here (joy, curiosity and admiration) are *not* those so classified in Brumoy’s didactic poem, nor does the collocation of pity (“pitié”), fright (“effroi”), and hatred (“haine”) as highly flammable passions match their assignment in the poem to *separate* classes of mild and violent. Since there is reason to believe that the *De motibus animi* was composed in roughly the same period as the *Théâtre des grecs*, the tantalizing question remains whether Brumoy revised his conceptualization of the calm and violent distinction prior to publication of the poem – not to mention, whether he was aware of Hume’s *Treatise*.<sup>61</sup>

In the discourse on the origin of tragedy, however, Brumoy is most concerned to demonstrate that the passions represented in literature and on stage serve, as it were, to inoculate us against real-life passions through the vicarious experience of them. Pity and fear are said to be the most “dangerous” of these, but by the insinuation into man’s heart of “the agreeable and the soft parts” contained therein, he is rendered “more humane” and taught “how to moderate his passions, when more passions shall come to be excited by real misfortunes” (xl). Yet Brumoy’s characterization of the effects of *real-life* pity and fear might well lead us to believe that he considered them *both*, in some sense, “violent” passions: “An horrible monster would make us shiver with fear. A miserable wretch, whom we could not relieve, would tear our entrails” (xxxvii). Note that Brumoy nowhere enjoins a Stoic avoidance of passion. The experience of compassion, for example, is important for our moral life, and the (duly tempered)

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<sup>60</sup> *The Greek Theatre of Father Brumoy Translated by Mrs Charlotte Lennox* (London, 1759), 3 vols., vol. 1, pp. xxxv-vi.

<sup>61</sup> See Haskell, “Performing the Passions”, p. #. As Michel Malherbe has pointed out, the Jesuit *Mémoires de Trévoux* was “remarkably silent about Hume” and does not appear to have reviewed the *THN* (“Hume’s Reception in France”, *The Reception of David Hume In Europe*, ed. Peter Jones (London, Thoemmes Continuum: 2005), 43-97, at 80). There were, however, reviews in other French-language journals as early as 1739.

spectacle of the passions reminds us of our spiritual destiny:

Indeed human life is a great theatre, where we are spectators of many evils of every kind: We feel upon that stage every day (besides indigence, grief, and death) raging desires, deceived hopes, despairing fears, and devouring cares. But all these representations only inspire a terror and a pity, more capable of lowering than strengthening the human heart. Let us say what we will, we are not comforted in our misery by the sight of miserable objects. Besides that every man takes as much care as he can to avoid a view of wretchedness, that he may enjoy the sweets of life with more tranquility, or that he may render himself pitiless and insensible of the miseries of his fellow creatures: forgetting that he is man, and so are every one of them: and that by long sorrow he must pay dearly for his short joys. (xxxix-xl)

These Christian moral imperatives are absent, of course, from Hume's account, and, as we have stated, it is not our intention in this essay to draw a direct line from the Jesuit humanist to the Scottish philosopher. Yet we believe that, in developing his theory of affects, Hume was by no means immune to aesthetic and literary discussions, and probably not only those mediated by his friend, Hutcheson. A trace of the long rhetorical tradition we have been excavating here may be glimpsed in Hume's observation that '[t]he raptures of poetry and music frequently rise to the greatest height; while those other impressions, properly called *passions*, may decay into so soft an emotion, as to become, in a manner, imperceptible' (*THN*. 2.1.1). Again, when he asserts that "[t]he same good, when near, will cause a violent passion, which, when remote, produces only a calm one" (*THN* 2.3.4), he comes close to the moral aesthetics of 'passion at a distance' expounded by Brumoy in his discourse on the origin of tragedy.<sup>62</sup>

By way of an envoi rather than conclusion, Brumoy's prescription of at least the "soft

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<sup>62</sup> The idea is also reminiscent of the proem to the second book of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, where the Epicurean philosopher, free from care, is compared to the man who watches sailors struggling at sea from the safety of the shore. The Lucretian passage is cited by Brumoy in this context.

parts” of the violent (*qua* unpleasant, combustible, entrail-tearing ...) passions points us in interesting ways to the attention recently devoted by modern psychologists to the “positive side” of “negative” emotions.<sup>63</sup> While the single most important dimension in modern psychological analyses of the emotions does, indeed, seem to be that of positive/negative, the meaning of this distinction has been mapped onto a variety of dichotomies including pleasant/unpleasant, approach/avoidance, functional/dysfunctional, and so on.<sup>64</sup> Given its long history from antiquity through to the eighteenth century, we find it surprising that the one distinction not routinely invoked in these modern psychological taxonomies is that between the calm and violent emotions.

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<sup>63</sup> *The Positive Side of Negative Emotions*, ed. W. Gerrod Parrot (New York: Guilford Press, 2014).

<sup>64</sup> Jerry Parrott has, however, drawn our attention to recent emotions models that invoke multiple dimensions, e.g. Phillip Shaver et al., “Emotion Knowledge: Further Exploration of a Prototype Approach”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 52.6 (1987): 1061-86 and Johnny R.J. Fontaine et al., “The World of Emotions is not Two-Dimensional,” *Psychological Science* 18.12 (2007): 1050-57, arguing for classification positive-negative, potency (control), activation, and unpredictability.